

AGN. NO.

**MOTION BY SUPERVISORS MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS AND
ZEV YAROSLAVSKY**

June 1, 2010

Support for Statewide Legislation to Prohibit Sale of Plastic Bags

Plastic bags comprise as much as 25 percent of the litter stream, significantly impacting our communities and the environment. In Los Angeles County alone, local and state governments spend over \$18 million dollars each year on prevention, cleanup, and enforcement activities to reduce litter. Communities throughout the State and around the world are grappling with this issue, and searching for ways to promote reusable bags in order to reduce the impact that littered plastic carryout bags have on their quality of life.

Despite efforts by Los Angeles County (County) to expand plastic bag recycling programs, only 5 percent of these bags are currently being recycled. The remainder of these bags ends up in landfills or as litter, clogging storm drain systems, and eventually make their way to waterways and ocean and threaten wildlife.

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Plastic bags marketed as “compostable” or “biodegradable” have not been proven to readily degrade in the marine environment, but instead are intended to be processed only by commercial composting facilities. Only a small number of cities in the State, none of which are in Southern California, currently support the infrastructure to collect and manage these types of bags. In addition, paper carryout bags are not an ideal replacement to plastic bags either. Evidence has shown that the production of paper bags may contribute to deforestation and greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, the County has taken many steps to promote the transition to reusable bags, which are the most economically and environmentally sustainable alternative.

Existing law prohibits local jurisdictions from imposing a point-of-purchase fee on each plastic carryout bag at large supermarkets and retail stores that have a pharmacy onsite. Currently, the County’s State Legislative Agenda attempts to overturn this policy; however it needs to be expanded to provide further guidance to the County’s Legislative Advocates regarding paper carryout bags and other legislation relating to carryout bags.

One such legislation is Assembly Bill 1998 (AB 1998), introduced by Assembly Member Brownley. AB 1998 would ban certain stores from providing single-use carryout bags to customers statewide. Stores could sell paper bags if they contain at least 40% recycled content, creating a significant incentive for customers to utilize

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reusable bags. These provisions are consistent with the Board of Supervisors' many ongoing efforts to address the environmental and financial impacts of single-use carryout bags.

WE THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Instruct the County's Legislative Advocates in Sacramento to support the passage of AB 1998 (Brownley); and
2. Revise the County's State Legislative Agenda to replace item # 2.7 (17) with the following language: "Support legislation which reduces the environmental impacts of single-use carryout bags and decreases the financial burden on local governments to address those impacts, including legislation which seeks to promote the use of reusable bags, reduce the use of plastic or paper carryout bags, and/or increase at-store recycling of carryout bags."

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